WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A distributed emergency building lighting system comprising:

an electroluminescent (EL) panel;

means for providing electrical power to illuminate said EL panel; and

control means electrically coupled to said electrical power means and said EL panel for illuminating a predetermined designated area within the building in response to an input stimulus.

2. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 1, wherein said predetermined designated area further comprises low-level path marking to provide visual delineation of the path of egress.

3. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 1, wherein said predetermined designated area further comprises floor illumination within a prescribed distance from at least one wall of a room in accordance with code requirements.

4. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 2, wherein said EL panel is a stripe of indeterminate length located on one or more of a designated area including on a floor and on a wall at or near the floor in accordance with code requirements.

5. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 2, wherein said EL panel lights an exit sign at or near the floor in accordance with code requirements.

6. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 1, wherein said power means further comprises an EL power supply having an input coupled to the line side of an electrical switch supplying commercial AC power to the conventional lighting located in said designated area and to a DC voltage source in the absence of AC power at the line side of said electrical switch.

7. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 6, wherein said EL power supply further includes means for adjusting the light intensity of the EL panel to a desired intensity.

8. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 1, wherein said control means further includes self-diagnostic testing means for verifying operational conditions of the lighting system including the detection of an electrical short circuit and an electrical open circuit of an EL panel coupled to said control means.

9. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 8, wherein said self-diagnostic testing means includes detection of a normal operating circuit of an EL panel coupled to said control means.

10. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 8, wherein said self-diagnostic testing means includes detection of an inoperative electrical power means.

11. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 8, wherein said self-diagnostic testing means further comprises testing means for determining the charge capacity of the battery.

12. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 11, wherein said battery testing means further comprises means for connecting a test electrical load to the battery for a predetermined short time interval;

means for sensing the battery voltage during the short time interval that said test electrical load is connected, and

means for providing an alarm indication in response to the battery voltage falling below a predetermined voltage value during the voltage sensing time interval.

13. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 12, wherein the test electrical load is in the range of 10 to 20 times the electrical load of the emergency building lighting system.

14. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 13, wherein said predetermined short time interval is in the range of 10 to 30 seconds.

15. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 8, further comprising means for activating said self-diagnostic testing means in accordance with a predetermined time schedule.

16. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 8, further comprising means for manually activating said self-diagnostic testing means.

17. Emergency building lighting system as defined in claim 8, further comprising means for activating said self-diagnostic testing means in response to the conventional lighting located in said designated area being turned on and off.

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